Georgetown man arrested for breach of trust in timber thefts

COLUMBIA— South Carolina Forestry Commission law enforcement officers arrested Billy Dean Blakely, Jr., of Georgetown Tuesday, Feb. 28 for selling timber he did not own.

Blakely, 42, was employed by Southern Wood Products and entrusted to haul harvested timber from two tracts of land managed by forest management company Weyerhauser, one of the largest private landholders in the United States, to contractually designated mills.

Billy Dean Blakely, Jr.

According to harvest records and surveillance, Blakely is alleged to have hauled at least 12 loads of timber from Weyerhauser property to different mills over several months' time under different contracts from those of his employer. Officials allege he used another company's name to enter the Weyerhauser-owned timber into the mills under contracts of other timber harvesting companies. The defendant would then receive payment for the wood through one of those other contracts.

Blakely was charged with breach of trust with fraudulent intent, which would be a felony because it involves timber theft of an amount more than $2,000, but less than $10,000. He faces a possible fine that would be at the court's discretion or imprisonment of not more than five years.

REFERENCE: SC CODE OF LAWS SECTION 16-13-230(A). Breach of trust with fraudulent intent.

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Forestry and timber-related businesses constitute the number one manufacturing industry in South Carolina. The South Carolina Forestry Commission is committed to protecting the Palmetto State's public and private forest resources, crimes against which cost landowners millions of dollars each year. To report a suspected case of timber theft, fraud or arson, call

the South Carolina Forestry Commission at (803) 896-8800.